

The Emergence and Development of Ecofeminism in Literature

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Abstract: Ecofeminism is a conceptual theory which suggests certain ethics and courses of action and motivates people for participating in social as well as environmental movement of consciousness. Starting as a subdivision of feminism and borrowing from ecology, socialism, Marxism and philosophy, it can be observed in the history even in the second wave of feminism, which shows that ecofeminism has a rooted context. Because, the degradation of nature is parallel with the history of colonization which starts as early as the 12th century and women's oppression becomes a common characteristics of the societies, ecofeminism is embedded within all colonial and misogynist activities as a reaction to all sorts of constraints.

Keywords: ecofeminism, theory, movement, waves of ecofeminism.

Introduction

Ecofeminism comes out as a movement in the 1970s but the theory appears around 1990s. The first incident calling forth ecological awareness of women in the world is the Chipko Movement. Preceding the UN Decade of Women, the Stockholm Environment Conference and 1980 Women's Pentagon Actions (WPA), Chipko 1 is the legendary story of a small group of Indian women. In 1974, twenty-seven women in Reni, Northern India protest the tree cutting. They hug the khejri trees for weeks and months to protect them and so the Chipko Movement takes place in history [2]. These local women save 12,000 trees from falling and inform the commercial disturbance of ecological system to the whole world due to the cutting of trees and replacing the native forests with monoculture plants and trees. They underline such environmental issues as indispensable parts of women's lives and the vitality of ecological integrity banishing human interference, which turns out to be a universal ecofeministic event in a short while. These women are quite determined to protect the nature even at the cost of their own lives. They are so protective of the forests as it is the direct source they benefit to run their houses and are dependent on tree products to live. Trees are synonymous with food, money, fuel, home products (herbal, medical and wooden material) and provender. They bear great importance for these Indian women because they know each tree and even the smallest parts of nature closely, while men display an unknowing attitude. Thus, women show great reaction to the cutting of trees which are loved like their children. Shiva notes that during their resistance against the men cutting trees, they sing a song which later becomes their saying including deep ecological morality:

“What do the forests bear?

Soil, water and pure air.

Soil, water and pure air

Sustain the Earth and all she bears”.

Similar to Chipko, another protest takes place in Kenya around 1970s. African women plant trees and reanimate the soil in the degraded fields of Kenya in this protest named as the Green Belt Movement. Under Wangari Mathai's guidance, they plant millions of trees in seventeen years. Even though it does not attract much interest like Chipko, it is still notable for initiating and contributing to an ecofeminist movement in the world. Therefore, defeating the imperial mind even temporarily, the Chipko women and other minor incidents are the perfect examples to prove that humanbeings and women can attain their rightful causes and refuse restrictions through non-violent mediums.

To dwell upon the ecofeminist history, it is right to mention Françoise d'Eaubonne as the early practitioner of ecofeminism. Even if the ecofeminist theory settles only after the 1980s, French writer d'Eaubonne is considered to provide the theoretical groundwork for ecofeminism around 1970s. She believes that the feminine Earth can be abundant for everybody again. In her ecologically feminist work, she coins the word *écoféminisme* and entitles the book as such. For this reason, she is mentioned as the founder of the movement [1]. She frames *écoféminisme* as an activism and ideology both of which become popular simultaneously all around the world. She believes that while taking active parts in nuclear power protests and other environmental movements, the ecofeminists actually demand all for the well-being of nature, ecosystem, animals, vegetation, women, men and children. Therefore, opening the way for future ecofeministic movement, she conveys that if their demands were satisfied, there would be no problems in the world.

Later in the 1980s, the number of ecofeminist writings increases and the controversial relation between women/nature is distinctly handled by writers from different fields. Ynestra King writes "The Women and Life On Earth" [3]. In 1983, ecofeminism is discussed as a way to offer some solutions to environmental degradation and the word ecofeminism is used in its actual meaning in 1987. Towards the end of the 1980s, Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Rosemary Radford Ruether and several more produce many works on ecofeminism. Basing their claims on scientific data, they reflect the pitiful situation, maldevelopment and suffering of nature alongside women in the Third World Countries and other parts of the world. In the 1990s, the movement receives even more interest what with the rise of the ecological collapse worldwide. Then, it continues to arouse arguments among writers and members of various different fields such as ecology, feminism, Marxism, socialism, post colonialism and so on.

Hence, the ecofeministic theory and its movement continue drawing attention up to date and urge people towards intuitive and empathic thinking about nature and women altogether as the suppressed concealed of societies. Because preserving the ecological balance and taking green precautions have been included in the agenda of the developed countries since Kyoto Protocol (1997), such matters bear much more significance now than they did in the past. The human race is getting more anxious each day for their lives with the changing climate and ecological disasters. Consequently, the movement shall be addressed again for possible solutions about environmental and ecological crises in the future because the present state of the world does not seem so promising right now.

Main body

Developed from other theories and extending the borders of these theories with an ecological feminist attitude, ecofeminism becomes potentially a melting pot for radical movements. It not only takes the feminist, ecological and postcolonial theories into the center of its main argument but also symbolizes philosophical, Marxist and socialist intuition. This is the reason why it is called to be made up of contradictory parts and to lack an infrastructure as a movement [3].

At the outset, it is declared that ecofeminism grows out of several feminism(s) like socialist feminism, radical feminism and Marxist feminism. However, it is quite visible that even though ecofeminism borrows heavily from feminism, there are still some disagreements along with the common fields between these theories. That is to explain that radical and liberal feminists deny at times to be associated with nature or any feminine relation to nature which they have mostly

despised in their movements. They put a distance between feminist thought and natural connotations only to refute the discoursed women and nature interconnection [4]. Furthermore, ecofeminism focuses on mutual problems of both women and nature while feminism examines women's problems mostly. In this respect, feminism is a closed field whereas ecofeminism is much of a universal theory embracing countless fields and beings. Moving on, ecofeminism which is in different tunes with the Liberalist and Leftist green or ecological theories because they do not take gender issues into account while demanding a change in the society. They offer reason, education and spirituality for ecological and environmental problems, which results in partial success or no success at all. . From a Marxist feminist view, the cultural-symbolic patterns linking women and nature are parts of an ideological superstructure by which the system of economic and legal domination of women, land and animals is justified and presented "natural" and inevitable within the total patriarchal cosmovision [5]. Apart from this, ecofeminism makes a combination of feminism with indigenous perspectives in the body of the movement and becomes a sibling connection between two theories because it problematizes issues common to both and rises against all dominations, which eventually marks it as a postcolonial theory. As well, ecofeminism is not limited to white women or men, it is declared to be a universal movement and thus, it is called an anti-racist theory. Then, ecofeminism benefits from science and technology for field research and the credibility of arguments.

Primarily, ecofeminism is a rather progressive movement as well as theory, which has been around in the world history since the 1970s. Thanks to the theoretical contributions of Franois d'Eaubonne and the term *écoféminisme* she introduces, ecofeminism embodies the general form it has taken up to date. Therefore, it is right to recall this theoretician and other writers who have had innovations for the ecofeminist cause and popularized the movement. Among the famous ecofeminists are Vandana Shiva, Greta Claire Gaard, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Maria Mies and Susan Griffin. Franois d'Eaubonne, who was born in 1920, calls upon women to initiate ecological revolution by raising green consciousness in the society. She demands a world in which humans can weave beneficial relationships with nature by abolishing the discoursed mainstream theory and cutting all strings with the patriarchal mentality. She introduces the term "*écoféminisme*" or "*écologie féminisme*" in her book *Le féminisme ou la Mort*. Due to the political atmosphere of her time, she grows more radical feminist in years. She has a revolutionary life and shows great influence on such writers as Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre in the 20th century.

Turning to Vandana Shiva, who is a scientist, environmentalist, writer and ecofeminist, has great works defending and propagating the movement initially in India along with some Third World countries and then the whole world. She is a scientific committee member in many organizations like International Forum on Globalization. She gives much importance to the ecological problems of the world and takes a major role in the universal ecofeministic issues. She points that the integrity, sustainability and balance of nature can be preserved through women's healing abilities and their efforts to awaken ecological consciousness on Earth. She supports the idea that a female ruling system instead of the patriarch can fix all problems at once. She shows the vitality of biodiversity and farmers' problem in India and generalizes it to the whole parts of the world. As the founder of the organization 'Diverse Women for Diversity', she articulates that female production is considered "non-production" simply because it has not much capital value, which has caused the collapse of the ecological balance at the end. Hence, she defines feminism and ecology as inseparable for the future of human beings alongside the world.

Conclusion

Ecofeminism is a social movement which associates women with nature regarding their interconnection, therefore offering solutions which shall serve to the problems of both sides. It is a philosophy and way of reading things in terms of ecology and feminism. It is one of the infrequent fields of study which combines two major distinct areas in one theory. The ecofeministic theory also states that reality is gendered at the outset in that hierarchical positions

direct the way life continues. Women are described to be strong, spirited emotional creatures who are closer to nature and who lack high intellect. This is the patriarchal politics of underestimation of the feminine values and characteristics to enable a rise and significance in the men's position. Making use of the discoured representation of women both as a weapon and a starting point, ecofeminism encourages women involvement in the movement to defeat man image. It is quite simple to alter the general depiction of men because it is enough just to recall the fact that men are also human. This means they have their own weaknesses, fears, feminine qualities and doubts, just like their companions, the women. At this point, men reunite with women and nature because they are the parts of the same harmonious ecological system.

Referances

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